Sinixt dialect

Sinixt (*sn-selxcin*) is one of multiple distinct dialects of the Colville-Okanagan Language. It is part of the Southern Interior Salish sub-grouping of the Salishan Language family. Traditionally spoken among the Sinixt People of the southern Interior Plateau region and based primarily in the Columbia River Basin, it is closely related to other Interior Salish languages and dialects.

Contents

Naming
Written record
Revitalization
References
External links
Bibliography
External links

Naming

Names for the different Salishan plateau languages are based in the land on which they are spoken, and, since colonization and the relocation of Interior Salish families, the differences between these languages are not as well-known today, and a more generalized language has come into use."[2] However, the Sinixt state on their website that they wish to preserve their language, with its unique dialectic differences, as exactly as possible, no matter how insignificant the pronunciation differences may be between the various dialects. They also "encourage people working to save the language to respect these dialects whenever possible and to honor them."[2]

The Sinixt Nation website also states that "(o)riginally there were two versions of the language for Sinixt peoples, one for the men (*sn-skəlxʷcin* or language of humans) and one for the women (*sn-səlxcin* or language of water). Both of these dialects were understood by all Sinixt people but reserved for speaking only by the determined sex." The language used today "is a combination of the two." [2]

Anthropologist James Teit noted in 1909 that the Sinixt dialect was distinguished from other plateau Salishan dialects by the slow and measured manner in which it was spoken.[3][4]

Sinixt	
(Arrow) Lakes	
sn-səlxcin	
Native to	Canada, United States
Region	British Columbia, Washington
Ethnicity	Sinixt people
Language family	Salishan ▪ Interior Salish ▪ Southern ▪ Okanagan ▪ **Sinixt**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	`lake1256 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lake1256)`[1]

It is unknown how many fluent speakers of the Sinixt language there are at this time although the Sinixt Nation website states that it is an endangered language "at risk of being lost forever if serious initiatives are not undertaken."[2]

Written record

Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy record fur trader Alexander Ross as the first person "to record an identification of the Lakes (Sinixt) people" by a transcription of their name, in September 1821."[5]

Anthropologists Franz Boas, James Teit and Verne Ray, and explorers George Mercer Dawson, James Turnbull, and Walter Moberly (engineer) all added to the extant written record of Sinixt words and place names.[6]

James Teit's information was recorded in consultation with Antoinette Christian and her family, who lived at kp'itl'els (Brilliant, B.C.).[7] Verne Ray spoke with James Bernard, who was chief of the Sinixt up to 1934.[8] William Elmendorf, whose findings are not published, consulted with Nancy Wynecoop, who was born around 1865.[8]

According to anthropologist Paula Pryce, the categorization of the Sinixt Dialect "shows a kind of academic chaos" with an inconsistency of terminology "caus(ing) disarray not only for anthropologists and historians, but also for governments and for the public..." [9] Some of this confusion is the direct result of changing practices in documentation, particularly in respect to Teit's research, which often utilized inconsistent orthography and typography during the early years of his documentation, but became more standardized later on. In many cases, the confusion also stems from various researchers, including Boas and Teit having had difficulty distinguishing certain sounds (and how they were created) from each other. [10]

It is the opinion of historian Eileen Delehanty Pearkes that the mapping and renaming of geographical features by Europeans has "helped erase the presence of Aboriginal human culture which thrived in the Columbia Basin for thousands of years." Pearkes further states that "(i)n some cases, even place names which are anglicized versions of Sinixt Interior Salish dialect words (E.g. Nakusp, Slocan, Comaplix) are not recognized by most contemporary residents as being linked to the region's First People."[6]

Revitalization

The Sinixt Nation website states that they "aim to create teaching aids and activity books for children and adults which will be accessible to all" on their website.[2]

References

1. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Lake [Okanagan]" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lake1256). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
2. "Sinixt Nation" (http://www.sinixtnation.org/content/language). Retrieved 28 April 2013.
3. The Shuswap, Teit, James. 1909, p456
4. Salish Ethnographic Materials, Teit, James. 1909, BC Archives; cited in First Nations Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use in the Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project Area. Bouchard, Randy and Kennedy, Dorothy. 2005
5. First Nations Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use in the Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project Area. Bouchard, Randy and Kennedy, Dorothy. 2005, p6

6. Pearkes, Eileen Delehanty. The Geography of Memory. Kutenai House Press, 2001. ISBN , p18
7. Reyes, Lawney. White Grizzly Bear’s Legacy: Learning To Be Indian, : University of Washington Press, 2002, ch.3
8. First Nations Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use in the Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project Area. Bouchard, Randy and Kennedy, Dorothy. 2004, p14
9. Pryce, Paula (1999). *Keeping the Lakes Way*. University of Toronto Press. p. 15.
10. Doak, Ivy Grace. The 1908 Word Lists of James Teit. 1983. University of Montana Master's Dissertation.

External links

- Sinixt Nation (http://www.sinixtnation.org/)
- Endangered Languages Website page for nsəlxcin (http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/oka/guide)
- Sinixt elder Eva Orr tells the land survival story of the Sinixt in the sn-selxcin dialect (http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1919/samples/7100)

Bibliography

External links

- Sinixt Nation Language Page (http://sinixtnation.org/content/language)

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